

Talk Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

WELCOME

Welcome to Issue 21 of the Talk Housing newsletter, packed with information for tenants and leaseholders. We hope you enjoy it and if you have any feedback or ideas for future editions we would love to hear them.

Please email community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

AUTUMN 2022 ISSUE 21



Tackling the rising cost of living

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royal_greenwich royalgreenwich

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housing

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5 minutes with Pat Slattery



As a former Council tenant, I am very proud to be responsible for Council homes in Royal Greenwich. But it can be a tricky job.

One area where we know we need to make improvements is in our repairs service. This is one of my top priorities. We are currently getting to the bottom of what goes wrong and why and will be sharing a proper improvement plan with you soon.

I hear some of you saying 'Pat, we've heard it all before'.

I totally get that. I am determined that in the next two years or so, we will have made real improvements to the service and hopefully you'll be saying to me 'things aren't perfect, but they're a lot better'.

I'm really delighted to share some good news and that is that we have been able to allocate £430m over the next five years to make improvements to many of our Council homes. This money will be spent on new bathrooms and kitchens, where these are due, improvements to the outdoor environment on estates and we will start the crucial work of reducing carbon emissions from our homes – through better insulation and other measures. This is a significant amount of money, although not enough – we need to see real investment from central Government to help us keep all of our homes at the high standard our residents deserve.

Generally, these are hard times. So many residents reading this will be struggling with the rising cost of living. We strongly advise you to speak to your energy supplier as soon as possible if you are struggling with your bills – they legally have to work out a reasonable payment plan with you.

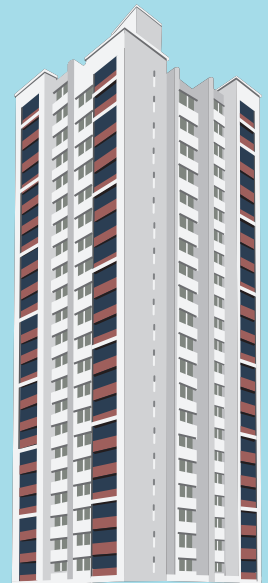
I wish you well coping with the difficult situation we are all in. Help is out there, please look at the Greenwich Supports webpage royalgreenwich.gov.uk/greenwich-supports for more information.

Pat Slattery

Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness

HOUSING CHAMPIONS

The Community Participation and Diversity Team will launch the Housing Champions scheme in Autumn 2022. The purpose of the Housing Champions scheme is to support residents to take a lead role in engagement and play an active part in shaping services for their homes and for their community.



This is an opportunity for residents to be involved in their community. This role can make a big difference and is crucial for us to understand the gaps in our services and how we can improve them.

Champions will be a point of contact for neighbours to raise issues, represent the resident voice and signpost people to important information. Officers within the Community Participation and Diversity Team will provide the necessary training and support needed so that Champions are equipped.

For more information or to register your interest, please email Community-Participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or call **020 8921 5149**.





**WE'RE
MOVING**



**TOWARDS
ZERO
WASTE**

FIVE WAYS TO BECOME A RECYCLING PRO!

AS A BOROUGH, WE'RE MOVING TOWARDS ZERO WASTE. BY MAKING SURE WE ALL PUT THE RIGHT THING IN THE RIGHT BIN(S), LESS WASTE WILL BE INCINERATED WHICH IS KINDER TO THE PLANET AND WILL MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE.

SO HOW CAN YOU GET RECYCLING RIGHT?

- Use separate bags or bins in your kitchen for recycling, and a caddy bin for food and garden waste. You can then easily sort items as you use them.
- Rinse out any recyclable household items when you wash your dishes.
- Put recyclable items into your recycling bin loose.
- Regularly check our website to find out what can and can't be recycled.
- Visit our *reuse* and *recycle* centre to dispose of extra recyclable and non-recyclable waste.
- Learn more about recycling.





WORKING WITH ESTATES TO TACKLE FOOD POVERTY AND THE RISING COST OF LIVING



Every day essentials including food, energy, fuel and bills have increased faster than people's incomes. We want to make sure that our residents have the help they need this winter. We want to ensure that our communities and residents have the help they need to be resilient

People should not have to choose between eating and paying the bills, and through our new campaign Greenwich Supports, we will be reaching out to all our council homes and estates to understand how we can narrow the gap and better support you with rising living costs.

What are we going to do?

We want residents to share how the cost of living crisis is affecting them and their communities, so we can shape how the Council responds to issues such as food poverty and unexpected hardship.

The Government's Household Support Grant funding of £2.3 million will be targeted to residents who need it the most. We are also working closely with our community partners such as Charlton Athletic Community Trust, Live Well and South East London Community Energy to respond to food and energy poverty.

To help residents with rising energy costs, we are managing the Council Tax Rebate and the Discretionary Council Tax Rebate for eligible households, as part of the Government's Energy Bills Rebate, you can find out more at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/counciltax



←
Scan me

You can have your say and guide the work we do going forward:
royalgreenwich.gov.uk/cost-of-living-survey.



WHAT SUPPORT DO WE ALREADY PROVIDE?



Council tax Support scheme

Reducing council tax bills for people on a low income.

Discretionary Housing Payments

Can cover the shortfall between housing benefit and rent.

Welfare Rights team

Our in-house team provides in-depth advice regarding your potential entitlement to benefits and if you are having problems with existing benefits.

Holiday Meals

We provide fuss-free meals to any child that wants one outside of term time. We do this with no direct Government funding as it is the right thing to do for children in our community.

Help with your health and mental wellbeing

Through livewellgreenwich.org.uk or via the free phone **0800 470 4831**.

They can also support you with concerns around debt, food poverty or concerns about high energy prices.

Advice Hubs

Get free face-to-face *advice* at community centres in East Greenwich, Eltham, Glyndon, Thamesmead, Abbey Wood, Greenwich Park, Eltham Page, Coldharbour, Middle Park and Woolwich.

Whichever estate or council home you live in, advice is on offer for anyone who needs it. Find out more by visiting royalgreenwich.gov.uk/Greenwich-Supports

GREENWICH 
SUPPORTS

Greenwich Builds is growing!



We are very excited to announce that we are expanding our council home-building programme, Greenwich Builds, with a commitment to create 1,000 additional homes on top of the 750 already being built around the borough.

This means the programme is more than doubling in size and will now deliver a total of 1,750 new council homes for local people on our housing waiting list.

All Greenwich Builds council homes incorporate cutting-edge sustainability features which both help the environment and deliver lower running costs for our tenants.

One in 10 homes are wheelchair-accessible, and we're building everything from one-bedroom apartments to five-bedroom family houses, responding to the diverse needs of people on our waiting list.

The new homes are due to be complete in 2024.



Where will our new homes be?

The first of the 1,000 additional homes to be confirmed are the 265 flats and houses we are buying from the developer Lovell Homes, to be built as part of the Woolwich Estates redevelopment.

We have also announced the first 16 locations for the council homes we are building ourselves. These are distributed across Royal Greenwich, alongside the 33 sites which were part of the first phase of Greenwich Builds.

Full details of the homes to be built on these sites will be announced as part of the planning application process, after each site is fully investigated to make sure it is viable for development, carbon dioxide emissions and running costs for tenants.



Why is the housing waiting list so long?



We now have over 24,000 households on our waiting list, with 1,600 people in temporary accommodation. This has built up over many years during which the government cut the funding councils need to keep building *affordable* homes, while also restricting their ability to borrow money to make up for the shortfall.

The number of council homes was further reduced by the government's Right to Buy policy, which allowed council homes to be sold privately. All of these factors led to the rate of council home-building falling far behind demand.

Thankfully the cap on borrowing has now been lifted, and together with money from Right to Buy sales and Mayor of London funding, we are once again able to build truly affordable council housing on a large scale.

The Greenwich Builds expansion shows that we are committed to doing everything we can to deliver truly affordable homes as fast as possible.

How can I apply for these homes?

Once complete, all Greenwich Builds homes will be available through our Choice Based Lettings system.

Preventing damp and mould

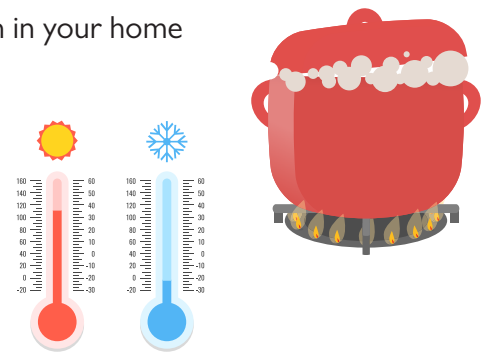
As we approach the colder months, there may be occasions where you notice droplets of water forming on windows and on glass doors, this is called condensation.

Condensation can also occur where there is not enough air circulating, normally behind large items of furniture such as wardrobes, above beds and in bathrooms and in kitchens.

Preventing condensation and damp

Here are some tips that you could do to avoid getting condensation in your home

- When you're cooking, put lids on saucepans
- Dry clothes outside, where possible. If you need to dry your clothes inside keep windows open windows to allow for air circulation
- Leave trickle vents open in your windows
- Do not block any air vents in your home
- If possible, keep your home warm over the winter months



What happens if I have mould in my home?

You can clear off some areas of mould growth yourself by using washing detergent with some bleach or purchase some specialist *mould* spray. Remember to use gloves and safety equipment such as goggles. If you are reaching into high corners remember to use a ladder.

How can I prevent mould coming back?

Continue to ensure your home is always well ventilated and clean any new spores you see. If after doing all the tips and have followed the advice given, you still experience damp and mould please get in touch with us, call **020 8854 8888**.





Barnfield Estate

Working with DG Cities, the Council welcomed the installation of state-of-the-art cameras on the Barnfield Estate to help catch and prosecute fly-tippers.

The cameras are the first first of the pilot scheme to deter, stop and catch those who illegally dump rubbish. Using motion sensors, images are only captured when someone is in the area where fly-tipping is likely to happen, so high quality images of the criminals can be taken.

Councillors spoke to residents about the issues around fly tipping and what these new cameras will do for the local area.

To book a bulky waste collection (it's free for council tenants) visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/bulkywaste or call 020 8854 8888.

Report fly-tipping: fix.royalgreenwich.gov.uk



Talk Housing



Complaints Handling Project

The Housing Ombudsman Service updated their Complaint Handling Code in March this year, introducing a set of new measures to help ensure that landlords are dealing with complaints effectively and fairly.

In order to improve complaint handling and ensure compliance with the new code, the Housing & Safer Communities Directorate have established a new project team who are currently reviewing the complaint handling policy and accompanying processes and procedures.

How can you help us improve our complaint handling?

We would like residents to help us shape our complaint handling going forward.

Key activities we would like residents to be involved with:

- **Complaints Survey**
Asking residents about their previous experiences of submitting a complaint, so we can learn from these experiences
- **Key Document Review and Feedback**
Asking residents to read through our draft documents such as letter templates & policy
- **Website Testing**
Asking residents to test out our new webpages and give us feedback

If you would be interested in any of the above and/or being a part of a strategic residents group that focuses on complaint handling and other performance monitoring for the Housing & Safer Communities directorate, please email at YourView@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.



Starting our repairs improvement journey



The council have completed a research project across the whole repairs service to understand what the current challenges are and how we can make improvements for both residents and staff.

This included research activities such as interviews with residents and staff, workshops, and shadowing trade staff completing repairs in residents' homes. We received a positive response and through this we were able to create a repairs transformation plan.

We've come up with a plan to *transform* repairs between now and 2026. In total, there are 52 recommendations and five overarching improvement areas that were identified from research. These include improvements such as:

- Reducing call waiting times for residents and improving our customer experience
- Supporting residents with more information and oversight via accessible digital tools to report and track repairs
- Improving the quality of our repairs
- Increasing our ability to fix issues the first time



Our teams are working hard to implement these changes, making your home a better place to live.

Families who have children with Special Educational Needs

The Community Participation and Diversity Team are looking for feedback and an opportunity to meet with members of SEND families on our council estates to better understand their experiences of Housing Services. If this is something you'd like to be involved in, please email our team YourVIEW@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Fostering

Could you help change a child's life forever?

Now more than ever, Royal Greenwich needs foster carers for our children and young people.

We want carers from all backgrounds, as we want our children in happy, loving homes.

Fostering is rewarding and you could make a real impact to a child's life!

We offer 24-hour support, generous allowances, excellent training and a wide range of support groups.

Contact us to find out more on **0800 052 1499** or visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/fostering

Housing and Performance Improvement Panel

Our panel of volunteers met for a briefing session on Wednesday 24 August 2022. We are hoping to hold our first official session in the autumn. Thank you to all our volunteers!

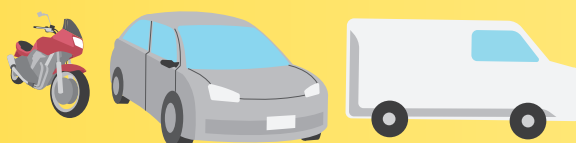
For more info email YourVIEW@royalgreenwich.gov.uk



Parking

The new parking enforcement arrangements are now in place. Thank you for your patience with the initial teething troubles which were due to some early technical issues with the new system. We hope it will provide you with an improved service.

For more information and to get your permit go to royalgreenwich.gov.uk/estateparking. If you don't have access to a computer and need support call **020 8921 4339**.



Paying your rent, benefits and financial advice

If you are struggling financially - take action, sooner rather than later. If you have any concerns about your rent payments – contact your Income Officer who can offer support, guidance and a realistic rent and arrears payment plan. Your Income Officer can be contacted via the telephone number and e-mail on your rent statement.

If you need help managing or understanding your Universal Credit claim, please call our

Universal Support Team on **020 8921 3333** on Monday – Friday, 10am - 4pm.

If you need advice on any other benefits or challenging benefit decisions you can call the Welfare Rights Public Advice Line **020 8921 6375** on Monday, Wednesday or Thursday 10am - 1pm.

You can also use the online form at **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/xfp/form/530**

This newsletter provides helpful advice for financial and well-being support on pages 4-5.

Wordsearch

Have a go at completing our wordsearch, and you could be in with a chance of winning a prize.

There are 10 words in the wordsearch below which will be in italics within this newsletter. You can either:

Email the 10 words to **YourVIEW@royalgreenwich.gov.uk** or tear out the back page and return this to the Community Participation & Diversity Team at the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, SE18 6HQ.

Please submit with your full name, mobile/telephone number and email.

Thank you to those of you, who sent in your answers from Issue 20.



Congratulations to **Rana** for winning the last wordsearch!

The words from the last wordsearch are: Favourite, Society, Homelessness, Voice, Organisations, Insulated, Wellbeing, Fuel, Food, and Kidbrooke

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N	D	N	E	B	F	J	A	A	N	B	J	N	Z
C	E	D	J	H	P	C	V	N	H	G	B	D	I
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